

LEAP Digital Health Hub

Research Funding

Call Details and Guidance Notes

Background

LEAP is elevating Digital Health capability in the South West of England and Wales through Leadership Engagement Acceleration & Partnership, cultivating a multidisciplinary, entrepreneurial, cross-sector Digital Health community across the South West of England and Wales. The Hub programmes comprise a Skills and Knowledge Programme which will deliver a selection of training courses designed for professional learners across the Digital Health sector, a Fellowship Programme that will bring together leaders in Digital Health as well as develop future leaders, and a Research Programme which will fund opportunities identified by hub participants.

Call overview

The LEAP Hub welcomes applications for research projects. Projects may seek funding between £30k and £100k and may *additionally* request time of Hub research staff (see below). Funding decisions will be made by October 15th 2024, projects must commence before the end of December 2024, and the maximum duration of any project is 18 months.

To apply, please submit your [funding application form](#) and accompanying documents to leap-dh-hub@bristol.ac.uk by midnight BST on 1st September 2024.

Key details

Minimum award	£30,000
Maximum award	£100,000 (100% FEC, awarded at 80%).
Opening date	17 th June 2024
Closing date	1 st September 2024
Application process	Download application form

Remit of funding

The Hub will **only** fund research projects within its 4 thematic areas (<https://leap-hub.ac.uk/research/>).

- 1. Care outside of the hospital** - Digital technologies have huge potential to help prevent or reduce the time people need to spend in hospital. This supports wellbeing and is a priority for health services. This can be achieved through health and social care services that support people in their own homes and communities (such as virtual wards). Further, these technologies can help deliver new services in our region's relatively under-utilised town centres, including community pharmacies, community diagnostics centres and establishing pop-up clinical services in former retail locations.

2. **Service and resource planning** - Health and social care are resource-constrained activities – the NHS and social care workforce operates very close to capacity and is difficult to expand in response to short- or long-term demand. Resources such as staff, facilities, ward space and ambulances all need to be planned in a dynamic, responsive and joined-up manner.
3. **Frailty, fall prediction and fall prevention** - Falls are a leading cause of hospital admission in older adults and a major priority for the Hub’s partner organisations. Predicting and thereby preventing injury such as hip fracture could help many older adults remain independent and well in their own homes.
4. **Smartphone and wearable technologies** - Consumer electronics including smartphone, wearable and video technologies put powerful computing and sensing capabilities in the hands of patients and health & social care professionals alike.

All proposals are required to set out plans, within at least one (or more) of the above themes, to produce novel, publishable, insights within engineering and physical sciences and computer science - *in addition* to any health and care, social science publications or impacts. Please note that the field of computer science does encompass both qualitative and quantitative research, and publishable work in this space can include new mathematics, algorithms, devices, sensors through to user studies, HCI and design. See the [EPRSC remit](#) for further guidance.

Because the remit of the funding is to create publishable new knowledge, we note that market analysis, pure evaluation or late-stage product development do not fall within the remit of this call. Successful commercialisation can be a proposed objective of a project, or a firm aim for future work, but should not be the primary goal. Results may be delayed for the protection of intellectual property, but should ultimately be published.

Although non-collaborative projects are eligible, proposals that demonstrate strong collaborations and a high potential for impact will likely perform well at peer review. We welcome applications which include industry partners, partners from the NHS and partners from social care and charities involved in this space.

Eligibility

All proposals must have a Lead Academic, who at the time of submitting the proposal is currently employed at least 20% FTE in an academic position at one of the five [Hub university partner institutions](#) (henceforth “Lead Institution”) with a period of employment that extends to at least 2 months after the end of the proposed project. Academics can lead on more than one proposal to the Hub, although they should take care to ensure they have enough capacity should one or more proposals be successful.

The Lead Academic does **not** have to be the lead- or sole- decision maker in the project; the project can propose whatever leadership structure it feels appropriate for decision-making, however the Lead Academic and the Lead Institution take contractual responsibility for the appropriate use of funds and compliance with normal contractual research terms, including the terms imposed by EPSRC, such as expenditure, reporting, ethical review and legal compliance. The Lead Academic should be at least 5% FTE on the project (either costed or as an in-kind contribution).

The Lead Academic is required to submit a short, signed letter as part of the paperwork, stating that they have agreed to take on the role. An authorized representative of the Lead Institution, as recipient of funds, is required to submit a letter or email confirming that that the proposal has been costed at 80% FEC and that the proposal has been duly authorized by the institution. Partner

organisations which are involved in delivery of the project should also submit a letter describing their contribution, including costing any cash or in-kind contribution, such as staff time, use of facilities, access to data etc.

Proposals are encouraged to include non-academic organisations. Such organisations can be a central part of the leadership team for the bid, including co-leading in project decision-making as a project partner. Organisations can only receive funds if they are eligible to receive funding from UKRI (see [EPSRC funding rules](#)). However, all organisations can claim small costs of participating in research (e.g. travel and subsistence). These costs should be explained in the proposal and will be paid at 80% FEC.

Due to EPSRC funding rules, companies and charities must:

- Declare themselves as a **project partner**, submitting a letter of support explicitly describing any in-kind (e.g. staff time for advisory or research participation, access to data or facilities) or cash contribution to the project. All such contributions must be itemized and approximately costed within the letter. Project partners **cannot** receive funds from Hub beyond expenses of participating in the research, such as travel to research meetings.

OR

- Declare themselves a **subcontractor**, in other words a third party individual who is not employed as staff on the grant, or a third party organisation, who is subcontracted by the host organisation to deliver a specific piece of work. As guidance, any such subcontract should be **less than 40% of** the value of the total funding requested. The subcontract will be subject to the procurement rules of the Lead Institution, including compliance with any relevant Subsidy Control legislation, and so should be discussed with the lead institution **before** submission. The reason for the subcontract should be clearly described and justified in the proposal so that it can be peer-reviewed. If the Subcontractor is contributing time or other in-kind support beyond the work in the subcontract, this should be described clearly in a letter to accompany the proposal, so that it can be peer-reviewed.

The Hub encourages appropriate involvement of industry and charities in the projects through one of the models above – therefore the details of the proposed arrangements should be detailed in the application and will be assessed as part of peer review. For the avoidance of doubt, the contractual relationship with the industry partner is the responsibility of the Lead Institution, including compliance with UK Subsidy Control rules and internal/external procurement rules.

Costing

In accordance with national agreements, EPSRC funds research at 80% fEC. Hub projects should therefore be costed by the Lead Institution at 80% fEC according to the institution's normal methodology for an EPSRC/UKRI proposal. The maximum size of each project is £100,000 (100% fEC), of which the Hub will fund 80%. Projects can include both Directly Allocated and Directly Incurred costs, which should be included within the overall budget. Please see [EPSRC's guidance on fEC costing](#).

All costs should be inclusive of VAT (where applicable) and/or any other applicable tax. The [terms and conditions for UKRI funding](#) apply. Applicants must demonstrate in the application form how the funding will be spent. The [sub-award document](#) detailing the terms and conditions of the grant is available on our website.

Proposals should be costed and approved by the Lead Institution before submission. By authorising the submission of the proposal to the Hub, the Lead Institution is confirming that the costing is correct and all necessary internal authorisations are in place.

Since the Hub is able to provide staff time (below) to support the project and the funding is intended to initiate new activities and to create new partnerships, **Lead Institutions may wish to consider if it is appropriate to waive some of the costs that would normally be included, in the form of an in-kind contribution.** Indications of institutional support along these lines will be considered as part of peer review.

Non-university partners are also invited to cost in-kind or cash contributions such as staff time into proposals, these should be detailed in a letter of support and in the finances section of the application form.

Projects can additionally request up to 20% FTE of one of the Hub's Researchers in Residence (a team of experts in Data Science, Software Development, and Human-Computer Interaction). The Researchers in Residence will be available for consultation and/or secondment onto projects as part of the Hub's support. These are funded by the Hub's core budget and do not need to be included in the institutional costing. The Hub will endeavour to meet those requests but this resource should not be a critical part of the project delivery. For example, if the project depends upon some software development, the project costing should request sufficient resource to achieve the minimally-viable piece of software for the research, with the additional Hub resource being there to improve, enhance or extend that piece of work, including by providing advice on best practice in implementation.

Project management and reporting

In most cases, responsibility for ensuring projects are carried out within agreed timescales and budgets should lie with the Lead Academic. Point of contact can be transferred to another project team member if they will be carrying out day-to-day management of the project.

Outputs/results of any project should be shared periodically with the LEAP Hub Management Team (comprising the Hub Management Board and Advisory Board) for inclusion in the LEAP project website and other promotional materials. Projects will need to submit a short report on the activities and outcomes of the projects, along with their final expenditure statement, within a month of the end of the project. Projects may also be called upon to present a summary of their work at Hub events and workshops.

Any publications or other outputs/dissemination resulting from work carried out under this grant must include acknowledgement of the Hub's funding by including the statement:

"This work has been supported by the LEAP Digital Health Hub, which has been funded by EPSRC under grant number EP/X031349/1".

Publications must adhere to [UKRI's Open Access requirements](#).

Review of applications

This is a single stage process. All applications to the Hub will be sent for peer review by non-conflicted referees. Plain English summaries of proposals will also be published in an anonymised form on our website and open to peer review from stakeholders including patients. This open review score will feed into the panel's deliberations.

On concluding the peer review process, proposals for each of the Hub's schemes will be ranked by score and considered by a panel comprising the Hub leadership team. This panel will also have access to comments and scores received through the open-peer review process, and will be asked to incorporate those in their deliberations.

Conflicted members of the leadership team will step out of the meeting during scoring of proposals in which they or their Universities are involved. Although quality will be the main criterion for funding, since the Hub has regional, multi-disciplinary, thematic, multi-sector ambitions, the panel reserves the right to make funding decisions which take into account as secondary factors the geographical distribution of its funding, the mix of disciplines and partners.

Assessment criteria

The criteria to be used in the assessment process will be as follows:

- Potential of the proposal to address real, important health needs, and appropriate plans for future funding and future impact
- Likelihood of producing novel, publishable insights within engineering and physical sciences and computer science, in addition to any health and care, social science insights or impacts. The proposal provides a clear statement of the state of the art in this domain and how the project will advance it
- Fit to at least one of the four [Hub Research Themes](#)
- Realistic and achievable project methodology and plan, including adequate thought given to data management and ethics approval processes, resources etc.
- Appropriate collaborations in place with appropriate in-kind or cash contributions from partners, preferably including partners in Wales and the South West
- Appropriate level of support from Lead Institution.
- Appropriate consideration of the downstream impact of the project on health equalities and on specific minority groups.
- Appropriate involvement of end-users of the research in the creation of the proposal or in the project if funded.

Deadlines

Complete project paperwork comprising application form, Lead Academic letter, institutional approval statement, and partner letters of support, needs to be received at leap-dh-hub@bristol.ac.uk by 1st September 2024. Late and incomplete applications will be automatically rejected without any review. Over-length applications or applications missing minor pieces of information will be returned for revision within 5 working days, and rejected if not rendered compliant within that timeframe. Please use the checklist provided in the application form to help ensure your application is complete.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the funding or application criteria, please contact Rachel Prior or Emma Brown at leap-dh-hub@bristol.ac.uk.

Key documents

- [Application form](#)

- [Sub-award terms template](#)
- [FAQ](#)